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ABSTRACT

Community colleges have the opportunity to systematically link their mission and role to national economic purposes and human resource development strategies. To take advantage of this opportunity, community college leaders, at the national, state and institutional levels, must be willing to commit to a new understanding of the roles these institutions must play in the post-industrial, high-technology society. In fall 1981, in an effort to formulate a national two-year college strategy in the area of career education/training and to link two-year colleges to the emerging national economic agenda, an American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) task force was formed to address the prospects of "Putting America Back to Work," through, for example, the development of a National Small Business Training Network, work to improve communications about and understanding of the Job Training Partnership Act, and a Kellogg Foundation initiative designed to provide assistance in building a network of public and private sector organizations committed to human resource development. Future steps of community colleges should emphasize: (1) the goal of excellence and the achievement of high standards; (2) improved worker productivity and related work habits; (3) institutional change and adaptation in support of the nation's economic development agenda; (5) high technology applications and careers; and (6) the educational applications of technology, computers, microwave transmission, and other tools. (LAL)

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Putting America Back To Work: Role of the Community College

by

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Presented to the League for Innovation
Newport Beach, California

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Introduction

It is a privilege and an honor to have the opportunity this evening to address this conference. This is doubly true because during the past three days the Board of Directors of the League has spent a considerable amount of time in "a working celebration" to reaffirm organizational strategies and plan programs for the League for Innovation which will provide the framework for League development as we move toward the year 2000.

In preparation for the meeting of the Board of Directors and this 15th annual League conference, I went back to review the genesis of the League and the work of the founders of our organization. The leadership and vision of men like B. Lamar Johnson, William "Bill" Priest, Ed Simonson, John Dunn, Charles Chapman, Joe Cosand and Norm Watson not only put the League for Innovation and individual League colleges on the "cutting edge" of innovations and community college leadership, they also provided the organizational climate which encouraged and supported resource and colleague sharing. The national credibility which we enjoy today as a vital national resource is, in large part, due to their efforts. I am pleased this evening to have the opportunity, with you, to salute these giants of America's comprehensive community college movement.

During this past year as President of the League I had the special privilege of working with the Board and the Executive Committee in identifying full-time--and hopefully permanent--leadership for the League. After three exhaustive meetings this summer in the Maricopa Community College District we agreed that the opporunity to lead the League toward the year 2000 should be offered to Dr. Terry O'Banion. I should indicate that this was my first experience at trilateral negotiations. Working directly with Terry O'Banion

and Chancellor LeCroy of the Dallas Community College District to consumate the agreement for Terry to return to the League was a unique experience.

As we faced this Fifteenth Anniversary "Working Celebration" and conference we did so with extreme confidence in the League and the opportunities before us--as an organization and at each of our member institutions. The important achievements of the League over the past fifteen years are but the initial steps into the rapidly emerging future.

Just as the past two decades proved to be a fertile environment for the rapid and almost explosive growth of two-year community, junior, and technical colleges, the next 17 years will prove to be equally exciting for those individuals and institutions eager to openly confront the changing education and training requirements of a nation in sharply focused governmental, social and economic transition. Those of us who choose to lead as well as those who are chosen to lead in the years ahead must be willing to reassess the role of two-year comprehensive community, junior, and technical colleges in the broader context of the nation's emerging economic and human resource development agenda. It is this agenda...the nation's economic and human resource development agenda and the emerging role of two-year colleges...that I want to focus my remarks on this evening. It is this agenda that will determine the ultimate relevance, and therefore public confidence and support, for the 1,231 two-year colleges positioned throughout the country. The clear opportunity we now have is to link systematically the mission and role of two-year colleges, half of which were created since 1960, to national purposes and development strategies. If we, as community college leaders, act decisively and with directness of purpose in the two to three year period ahead, we will insure a more certain future for our institutions as part of the longer

term economic revitalization efforts of our nation. Failure to act in a systematic and consistent manner will insure isolation and loss of confidence that the "value added" worth of two-year colleges cannot be defined. Such a conclusion in individual states and in individual communities will increasingly show up in the unwillingness of the broader public to support our institutions financially. This is clearly a challenge to the League for Innovation and its eighteen member colleges working in concert with our national leadership at the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges and the Association of Community College Trustees.

Trends and Conditions

John Naisbitt, in Megatrends, outlines in a highly readable manner the shift our nation is experiencing as we move from industrial production to providing services and information. The key observations or arguments which one draws from Naisbitt's work is that long-range or strategic understanding is important to organizational success. Peters and Waterman in describing characteristics of successful business organizations in their book In Search of Excellence, note that it is the "bias for action" and "knowledge of the customer" which stand out as exemplary characteristics. I believe we must find ways to apply these same principles in our pursuit of excellent community colleges.

Two-year college leadership, at the national, state, and institutional levels must be willing to commit to a new understanding not only of the emerging roles which these institutions must play in the post-industrial, high-technology society, but they also must commit to new understandings and strategies that will be required to get us there. The often uncertain

and overly complexed agendas of the past must be replaced with clear, definitive and strategic agendas for the future. The conditions at the national, state and institutional levels appear to be right for two-year colleges to make what Marilyn Furgeson describes as a "paridigm shift." This will happen, however, only if we recognize the opportunity and seize the moment to act.

The rapidly changing climate related to the national consciousness regarding the need for educational reform created over the past six months by the National Commission on Excellence in Education provides a unique "window of opportunity" for everyone associated with or committed to equality of opportunity and public education in America. More recent reports by the Education Commission of the State's Task Force on Education and Economic Growth and the Carnegie Foundation's recent report on the High School point to the key issues which are likely to guide our thinking and actions over the immediate years ahead. Bud McMahon, the new chairman of the joint AACJC/ACCT Task Force on "Putting America Back to Work," speaking at the ACCT convention a year ago in New Orleans, indicated that he believed that we faced a three year "window of opportunity" for the nation's two-year colleges. Analysts reviewing the current euphoria regarding public support for reform of our education systems indicate that if we miss the opportunity to capitalize upon the current situation it could well be two decades before the same opportunity cycles again. All signs point to the need for leadership and the related need to act.

Putting America Back To Work - A National, State And Institutional Strategy

Dale Parnell, in the fall of 1981, in an effort to formulate a national two-year college strategy in the area of career education-training and to

link two-year colleges to the emerging national agenda focusing on the interrelated issues of economic and human resource development, appointed a national AACJC Task Force to address the short and longer term prospects of "Putting America Back to Work". A primary objective was to provide national leadership in the formulation of a national strategy which would recognize the potential role of two-year comprehensive community colleges. The Task Force was charged to review the role of the nation's two-year colleges in light of (1) the continued "depression era" levels of national unemployment, (2) the emerging demands of high technology related to re-education and training and (3) merging national legislation related to the Job Training Partnership Act. The Task Force, as requested, made it's initial report at the 1981 AACJC national meeting in St. Louis, Missouri.

In line with the work of one of the conference participants, Dr. Pat Choate, the Task Force concluded "...Our country desperately requires a bold new approach to human resource development..." They went on to say that "...[the] new approach must be equivalent to the 1960's commitment that landed a man on the moon. Our 'moon shot' for the 1980's must be aimed at the triple goals of ample employment opportunities, increased productivity, and economic health for the individual and our country. We must rise above the way things have always been done and search for new approaches and new combinations of resources."

The data regarding the American worker outlined by Choate in Retooling the American Work Force: Toward a National Training Strategy continues to provide a realistic framework within which two-year colleges must reassess future opportunities as a central institution in an overall national strategy directed to economic revitalization. Choate indicates that:

a. Twenty percent of American adults are functionally illiterate--unable to read a job notice, fill out a job application, or make change. Yet the nation has no policy or program for dealing with this functional illiteracy.

b. Almost six percent of the civilian work force suffers from alcoholism, costing the economy over 28 billion dollars per year in lost production, of which two-thirds is due to absenteeism, and increasing employee-related health and medical costs by over $18 billion. Yet little remedial assistance is available, and in those cases where it is, such as programs for federal workers, it is being cut back drastically.

c. Large numbers of workers who possess critical technological skills are retiring, and replacements are not being trained. For example, the average age of the nation's 300,000 machinists is 58; yet industry is training only a quarter of the skilled machinist needed each year to replace those lost through retirement and attrition. The National Tooling and Machining Association forcasts that the shortage of machinists will grow to 240,000 by 1985. If younger replacements are not trained soon in the machinery trades and other fields, these technology skills shortages will thwart efforts to modernize the U.S. economy in this post-industrial period.

d. The turnover rate in the manufacturing work force annually involves almost a third of all workers--significantly reducing productivity.

e. As the economy robotizes and domestic jobs are lost to foreign production, 10 to 15 million manufacturing workers and a similar number of service workers likely will be displaced from their existing

jobs. Much of this displacement will occur in the mid-to late 1980's. Yet, as potentially disruptive as these changes will be--economically, socially, and politically--the nation has no coherent policy or program to help displaced workers upgrade their skills for replacement jobs.

f. The most productive age group--the 25 to 44 year-old workers--will comprise over 54 percent of the American work force by 1990; these workers can make an impressive contribution to economic renewal, but only if their skills can be upgraded. Yet, the nation has no coherent policies to provide added training for those already employed.

Based upon these data and considerations, and in light of efforts in Congress to pass the business supported Job Training Partnership Act (1982), AACJC, acting in concert with ACCT and with support from the Kellogg Foundation, implemented a broadly based national communication and model building program under the banner "Putting America Back To Work." The objectives of the first year effort were to:

1. Work with ACCT to better define the BICCC concept in light of the President's Private Sector Initiative Task Force.
2. Fully implement the National Small Business Training Network as a demonstration project central to local programming and service to the American business sector.
3. Work to improve communications and understanding of the new JTPA which in the first nine months of operations (effective October 1, 1983) would provide $3.5 billion new dollars to the nation's education and training systems.

Effective October 1, 1983 the following levels of federal revenues have been allocated to the seven states identified for the period thru June 1984: California, $294.4 million; New York, $195 million; Michigan, $160.9 million; Ohio, $152.7 million; Illinois, $147.7 Million; Pennsylvania, $144.6 million; and Texas, $119.3 million.

A key question for two-year colleges in these states as well as in the 43 others is, what share of these revenues will go to enhance programs and student opportunities in individual institutions? In line with the decade commitment of the federal government to the Manpower Development Training Act (1960's) and the decade commitment to the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (1970's), we can expect at least a full decade of joint federal and state commitment to this new federal-state-business sector initiative.

Because of the substantial backing of the nation's business community through the National Alliance of Business, the Business Roundtable and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the new federal resources available for worker re-education and training must be approved through a state level and local level planning mechanism which represents the business interests of the state and local community. Local Private Industry Councils or PIC's as they have become known will be familiar to all in the community college movement. The JTPA, the federal replacement for CETA, has already emerged in many communities as a key component of business-industry-government-college partnerships. This new federal strategy and legislation, linked with new Vocational Education legislation to be developed in 1984, and with recent national reports calling for increased support for science, mathematics,

computer and basic skills education, will provide a significant part of the overall comprehensive framework for two-year college program development and expansion over the next dacade.

4. The Kellogg Initiative, which provided a half-year leave of absence for me from Cuyahoga Community College District during 1982-83 had four major objectives. While Dale Parnell described the Kellogg initiative as "friend raising" this past year has been an exceptionally busy one focused on the following activities:

   - Providing staff support for the national Task Force's work.
   - Working with national business focused organizations to assist in shaping national strategies and policies related to economic and human resource development so as to promote a closer tie between the two and to ensure a fuller use of all human resource development resources. The joint AACJC and ACCT Putting America Back to Work Task Force will now provide over the next three-year period continuing directions for this effort.
   - Assisting in the building of a network of public and private sector organizations committed to the development of a comprehensive, coordinated approach to human resource development as a conscious tool for the nation's economic development. Such an approach will recognize the tremendous resource represented by the nation's community and technical college system.
   - To provide practical guidance and technical assistance to public and private sector organizations and institutions at the local level in building more effective human resource development systems.

The result of a full year of intensive work at the national level has already had a significant pay-off for two-year colleges. The visibility of two-year colleges with the National Commission on Employment Policy, the American Economic Development Council, the Conference Board, the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education and the National Governor's Association will be key to future national and state policy and strategy development related to two-year college contributions to human resource development, economic development and "Putting America Back to Work."

Implications For The League For Innovations And Two-Year College Leadership

As I have indicated, I believe leadership, in the League for Innovation, in League colleges and in two-year colleges nationally will make the critical difference in how our colleges are responded to at the national, state, and local levels.

As we gaze into the "crystal ball" with the "year 2000 marking," there are a number of observations we can make and conclusions we can draw. The following observations are in large part drawn from my year of work on the national project as well as from the plethora of literature regarding environmental changes and the future. I must admit some of this is just good old common sense. These issues and observations will likely guide our basic directions as we approach a future that is yet uncertain.

a. The goal of excellence and the achievement of high standards will remain a mandate not only for public education but all of American society in the next decade. John Gardner's challenge of "Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?" written twenty years ago and ignored by many will become a new best seller.

b. Improved worker productivity and related work habits, including the moderation of salary and compensation increases will be required to meet the challenges of foreign competition and world economic conditions.

c. The nation's economic development agenda whether expressed through such euphemisms as "supply side economics" or national industrial policy will continue to be center stage in the formulation of national and state strategies for economic recovery. Regional variations--therefore regional differences even among two-year colleges in the various states--will continue to provide differential opportunities and challenges for change and adaptation.

d. High technology applications and careers, even though they will make up less than 3% of the national workforce in the next decade and a half must be addressed as an important national priority. Micro-processor technology and applications, including work just initiated at the University of Texas in Austin through the combined efforts of Control Data Corporation, Honeywell, and other computer producers, will shape the realities of the year 2000 for our nation. This will be particularly true in the international competition between the United States and Japan. This "Fifth Generation" computer project is a competition which the USA must win to keep the economic competitive edge in the global economic race.

e. The application of technology, computers, micro-wave transmission, cable and other such tools will represent the single most important area of development in the next decade for educational professionals as we struggle to fulfill the American promise of maximum educational

opportunity for the masses of our nation. The thin line between formal and informal education will become increasingly blurred as personal development and leisure time education become more relevant to our citizens.

f. The nation's HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT agenda represents the single most important challenge to our ingenuity and future. Carnevale, in a recent publication for the ASTD National Issues Series entitled Human Capital: A High Yield Corporate Investment, says it best. He sizes up our situation thusly: "We are presently in the midst of a shift to a post-industrial service and information economy where productivity will increasingly be embodied in persons not raw resources or machines." Even with our apparently unrelenting faith today in the computer as answer, many of us will increasingly move to the point of view as expressed by Carnevale that "...educated, healthy, trained and spirited people are the ultimate source of economic growth. They are not simply the passive consumers of an autonomous and inhuman economic yield."

g. Finally, the nation's 1231 two-year colleges, acting as individual institutions as well as through consortia such as the League for Innovation, currently represent the most underutilized resource in the nation's overall strategy for assuring an educated adult population as well as a competently trained work force.

Conclusion

The emergent role of the comprehensive two-year community college in the American society as we face continued economic, social, and governmental transitions is that of a well positioned educational broker, educational

partner and educational leader. Our ability to fulfill these roles will be directly related to how we position ourselves in the next three years to reaffirm in the mind of the general public as well as the nation's business-economic interests our commitment and willingness to perform the most fundamental tasks facing our society - the training and retraining of our citizens for the jobs of the future and equipping the American public to live productive lives in the emerging service and information society.

This is the challenge of the League for Innovation and all of you that have come to help us in our "working celebration" and our Fifteenth Anniversary.

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